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Wedi ei ariannu gan
Llywodraeth y DU

WE MIND THE
GAP™

Young people research

Findings and recommendations



POWERED BY
**LEVELLING
— UP —**

WEDI'I YRRU GAN
**FFYNIANT
— BRO —**

Content



- The **start** of the journey
- **Finding** the missing voices
- What did we **learn**?
- **Who are** the young people of Wrexham?
- End of a chapter, **start** of a new one



The start of **the journey**

Launching the **Big Conversation**



Objectives: what we wanted to achieve

In one sentence, we wanted to
**understand the lives of young people
(18 to 21) in Wrexham and how we
could support their needs.**

To do so, we aimed to:



Understand what it is like being young person in Wrexham.



Explore what the challenges are and where they may lie (if they exist).



Understand what facilitates or inhibits young people to achieve their full potential.



Identify recommendations to better engage with this audience.

Finding the **missing voices**

Research phase and data collection



Methods: How were we going to find young people?



Phase 1

The Big Survey:
“Hearing what
young people
have to say”



Phase 2 to 4

Young people’s
focus groups



Phase 5

On-street
engagement:
going where
young people are



Phase 6

Digital entries
– Wrexham voices



Phase 7

Parent and
teacher insight

Phase 1: The Big Survey: Hearing what young people have to say.”

Our starting point a survey, to give us a chance to introduce the project, recruit and reach young people anywhere.

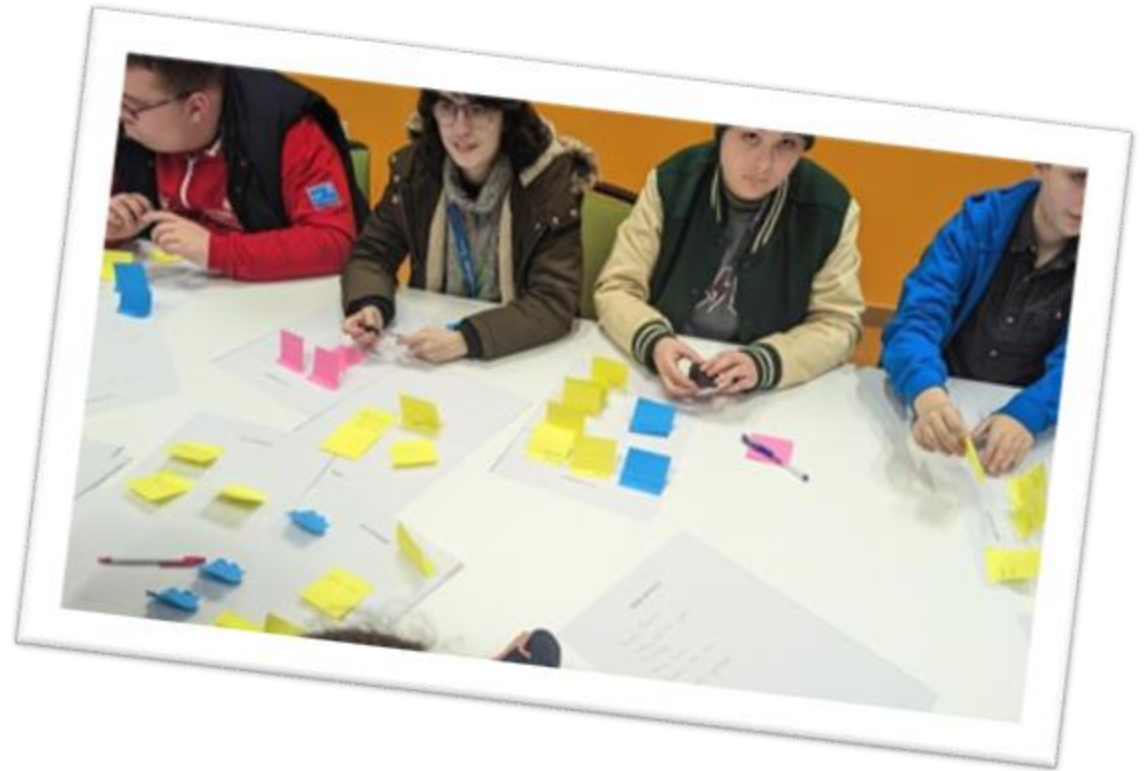
Responses could be anonymous, the survey was short, easy to fill and could be saved and completed in several parts to make it as accessible and engaging for young people.

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Phase 2, 3, 4: Young people's **focus group**

- We organised **focus groups** at **Coleg Cambria** as well as **Maelor sixth form** where we spoke to students aged 18 to 22.
- We also hosted an **online focus group** where we spoke to young people who were not in school or education in Wrexham.



Phase 5: On-street engagement: going where young people are

We knew we could not rely on developing content and hoping young people would find us.
We needed to be the ones to find them, to reinforce how much we cared.



Phase 6: digital entries

The data we got on on-street was invaluable. We could not miss out on feedback from people who might not want to speak to us in-person. Our **digital entries** asked the same questions we were asking on-street, allowing people to **anonymously reach out to us** by writing down or recording their thoughts.

Questions were broad and there was no word limit giving more in-depth and less led answers than in the survey. **Some people later agreed to speak with us over the phone** where they were able to expand on some of what they had shared in their entries.



Phase 2, 3, 4: Parent and teacher's **focus** group

- Finally, we **spoke to parents and teachers** across Wrexham to understand their perspective on some of the issues young people were raising.



So... what did we learn?



Analysis and findings



My short-term goals are to move to Leicester to complete my 3 years of dance university, My long-term goals are to have my own dance studio local in Wrexham to help young kids find their passion and talents.

I want to be able to **spend time with my friends and family**. Enjoy days out and good food without money worries.

I think it's made me **more anxious**; I struggle to find motivation to do work.

To buy my **Dream house in the country** with a big garden and build my dream pond with fish in it and to **work in a park ranger job** that pays well.

I am a lot more **anxious now** than I was before covid. Therefore, impacts me with some normal life activities and **hits me when least expected**.

I missed out on **key knowledge** I could have learned if it was in the normal conditions.

A day in the life of...

Emma



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Phase 6: digital entries

I panic when something changes. My worries for said goal is that if it were to suddenly change then I **wouldn't be able to cope with change.**

It's really tough down here, **lack of funds and support is really draining me.**

I worry that I **won't be able to afford the cost of living** with the wage that I am on.

Also, **what happens if my parents get ill,** will I be able to look after them?

...long-term goals would probably be to **not be insecure in my abilities** and work to improve them, also getting a permanent job that pays, so I can finally **stop sponging off my parents.**

I've never been able to find out what I would like to do.

Parent and teacher insight

- Parents and teachers felt young people lacked aspirations
- Parents and teachers thought young people seemed unaccountable
- Parents and teachers felt young people did not want to utilise existing support services

- Young people said they had aspirations but not traditional academic and employment aspirations.
- Young people felt they had been held responsible for recent events (e.g., covid spread)
- Young people felt existing services were not accessible, approachable, or appropriate

This perspective confirmed **the disconnect between young people and those who support them**, as well as the system they are a part of.

Communication between families and schools was seen as crucial, to push and support young people before they disengage.

A clear need to support young people to “catch up” on skills they might have lost through the pandemic (social skills training, time management, resilience building) was also identified.

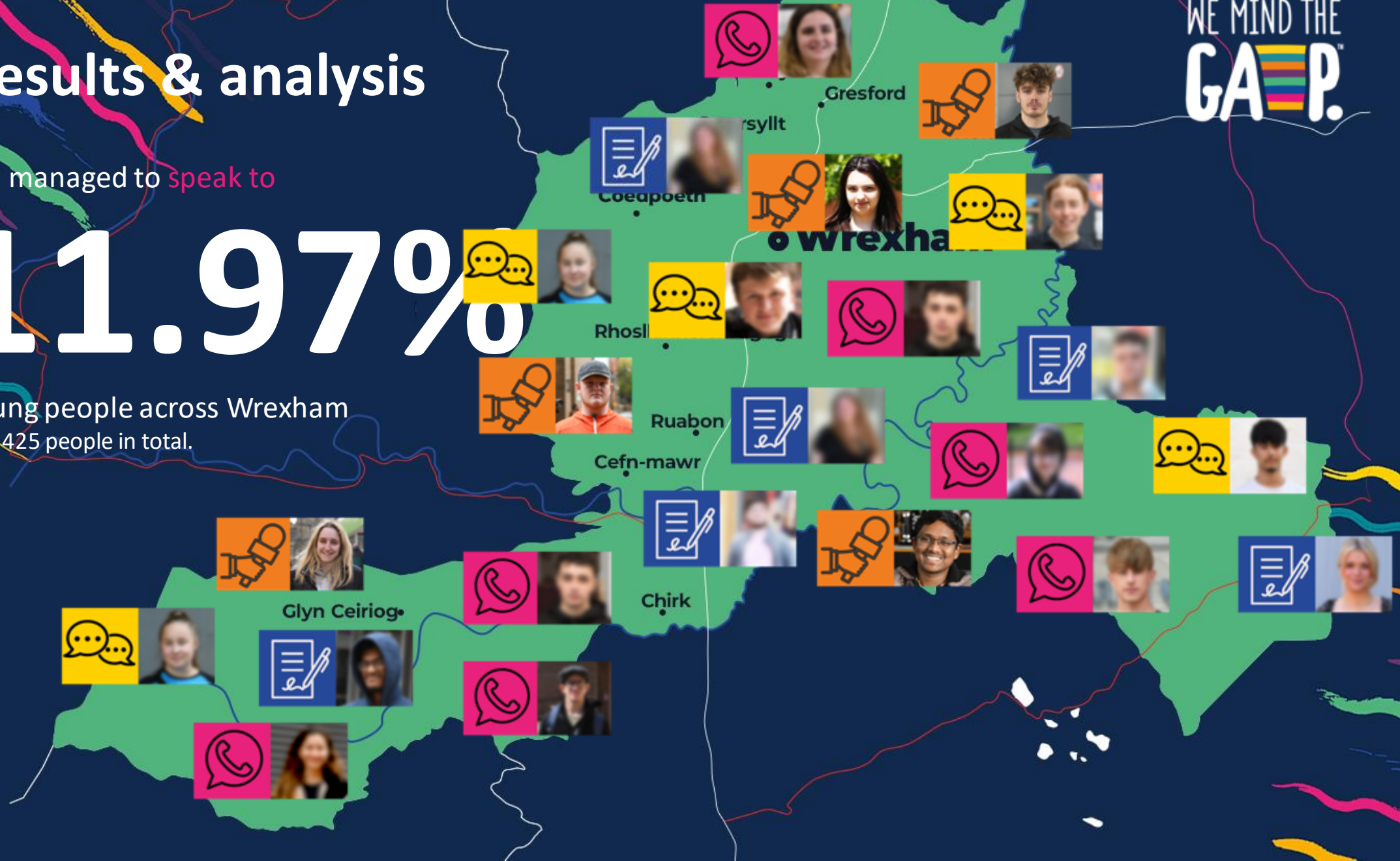
Results & analysis

We managed to speak to

11.97%

young people across Wrexham
and 425 people in total.

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Findings



Young people were not always where we expected them to be.

Reaching them involves understanding exactly where they might be, which was challenging at several points throughout the project.

Language, message and reasoning are crucial to keeping them engaged.

Young people did not engage with us if they did not see a clear benefit for them.

The events from the past decade have impacted them greatly.

They did not always feel people around them understood how much.

Their habits, communication social engagement, professional expectations and goals have shifted.

They did not always fit with pre-covid expectations.

Findings

Happiness was often integral to their sense of purpose.

Much of this was lost during and since the pandemic.

Many felt Wrexham did not always have the right support and infrastructure.

This would help them achieve their goals or even reassess them.

Motivation was at an all time low for many of them.

They felt they had missed out on an important part of their development and lacked support from people around them with power to make a change.

There was still a lot of positivity, many young people were inspiring and inspired.

They just felt they lacked the support they needed after the significant impacts that recent events had on their lives.

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Who are the young people of Wrexham?

Audience personas

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Social, but struggling

"I'd feel a bit anxious because when I get up in the morning sometimes, I feel like I don't want to go out the house but then I've got my friends and my loads of people to support me to come out the house so like I love doing that and all that and I just go shopping and play pool."



- Engage socially but **might struggle with mental health**
- Pandemic let them **feeling lost and daunted**
- Feel a **lack of autonomy** as their expectations and goals have had to shift
- If employed, **not often satisfied with** their **job**.
- Spent their **free time with friends**, or at **home, online**.
- They feel **lonely** and **misunderstood** by older adults



Diverse and disengaged

“We need leadership people that actually listen to the people because what is a city, what is a town, what is a village where you are in charge of people, when you don't actually listen to them? What's the point of having the responsibility of taking care of people when you do not actually look at what the people need?”



- **Strong identity** to specific social groups and **very accepting of diversity**.
- Feel **let down and blamed by society**, mistrust of older generations
- Regular and **cynical social media use**
- **Driving mental health awareness** and demanding more acceptance.
- **Missed out** on **learning** opportunities
- **Unwilling to conform** to traditional routes
- Drawn towards **careers in the public sector** where they can **make a change**



Resilient and self-reliant (the side hustler)

“I work, like, as a freelancer. I can just work whenever I want to work so that's nice. And this is how I've got this really good niche job, because I'm finding more interest in the stuff that's not about education anymore.”



- Have emerged **more resilient** from the pandemic
- **Used to** living in **uncertainty**
- Don't want to conform to old norms, **finding** creative and entrepreneurial **ways to make money**
- **Engage** with **social media** for their **own ends**
- **Politically savvy** and aware of current affairs, **critically engage with information** presented to them
- **Champion** diversity and inclusion

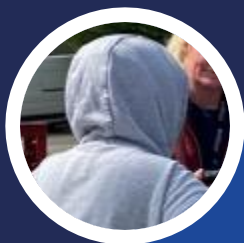


Let down and just living

“We just need somewhere we can have more places to take the kids because at the end of the day it's ...it's just full of crime... it's disgusting.”



- Often **unemployed**
- Feel like they might **never get work** and have **given up** trying
- **Cost of living** crisis has **hit them hard**
- **Occasionally young parents**, if not, main worries are **how to provide** for the people around them
- More likely to turn to **illegal activity** and engage in **risky behaviours**
- Also **feel let down** and **don't trust institutions** around them



The COVID cohort

“You’re really lucky to speak to her today, she very rarely goes out. She’s always at home with me.”



- This is the group we **engaged with directly the least**
- Usually described by their peers
- Often at home, **rarely socialise**
- Struggling with **residual mental health issues** from the pandemic
- Often **not registered** in **school** or **working**, or don’t attend if they are
- Heavy **online** presence
- **Do not seek help**, traditional routes don’t feel accessible

Skip-the-ads generation

They don't want to be manipulated; they can choose what they want to see and understand how algorithms work.

Sound-bite generation

They have a short attention span and a preference for engaging with snappy materials that don't take up too much of their time.

No accountability generation

They are anti-institution and are ready to forge their own paths outside of traditional routes.

Digital nomad generation

They are used to being educated online and know that they don't have to be tied to one location to work

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What is different about this research?

Introducing behaviour change

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The COM-B model of behaviour change



COM-B component		Examples
CAPABILITY An individual's psychological and physical ability to engage in a given behaviour.	Psychological Knowledge and information, psychological strength, skills or stamina.	Knowledge Skills Memory, Attention and Decision Processes Behavioural Regulation
	Physical Physical strength, skill or stamina.	Skills
OPPORTUNITY External factors that make the execution of a behaviour possible.	Social Opportunities as a result of social factors, such as cultural norms and social cues.	Social Influences
	Physical Opportunities provided by the wider environment, such as location or resources.	Environmental Context and Resources
MOTIVATION Internal processes that influence our decision making and behaviours.	Reflective Reflective processes, such as making plans and intentions, evaluating the past/past experiences, evaluating options available to you.	Social/Professional Role & Identity Beliefs about Capabilities Optimism Beliefs about Consequences Intentions Goals
	Motivation Automatic processes, such as our desires, emotions inhibitions, habit.	Social/Professional Role & Identity Optimism Reinforcement Emotion

The COM-B model of behaviour change



The COM-B model of behaviour change



The COM-B model of behaviour change



End of a chapter, start of a new one

Recommendations & next steps



Recommendations

- WMTG to partner with other organisations to develop an innovative 'hub' for young people in Wrexham. Whether the hub is a physical location (fixed), a community of people (mobile), or an online provision should be determined by consultation with young people
- WMTG to partner with other organisations to develop a 'reset intervention' which enables young people to revisit the years of lost experience and learning that they would have had were it not for the COVID pandemic
- WMTG currently offer services for young people to support them into work and education, but they are under-subscribed and are mainly implemented in the North of England. We recommend that WMTG 'test' the current model (including communication efforts, social media platforms, website, etc
- An 'explorer' model was trialled during the research with limited success. However, it was likely that the young people we recruited to implement this model were being asked for quite a large commitment with little commitment in return

End of a chapter, start of a new one

Six months ago, we launched **the Big Conversation**,
and today marks the **end of the first phase**.

We **wanted to find who the young people of
Wrexham were**, where they were and **what they
needed**.

So... now what?



Young people have taught us a lot

They did not come directly to us, we had to find them, and there are groups we did not manage to reach.

They are easily disengaged by the wrong type of language or agendas.

Many habits were formed, good or bad, during lockdown, and are now hard to break.

Their lives were widely impacted by COVID, and they sometimes feel older generations don't realise that.

A lot of them are seeking a purpose, deeply correlated with happiness.

There has been a shift in the way they communicate and view the world.

Motivation is low, they need support as well as a challenge, something to work towards that aligns with their beliefs and values.

They want to feel understood and supported to make their own decisions, even if those don't fit traditional expectations.



Thank you



Questions?

WeMindTheGap is part-funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in partnership with Wrexham County Borough Council.